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AUTHOR Pifer, Glenda; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Few people realize that the average person uses about 60 gallons of water each day. Water shortages are already occurring on a regional scale; someday they may become a national problem. Accordingly, this checklist is designed to help house and apartment dwellers determine how efficiently they use water and identify additional ways to save it. Presented are over 60 suggestions for conserving water in such household activities as personal care, laundry, outdoor work, food preparation, and cleaning. (WB)

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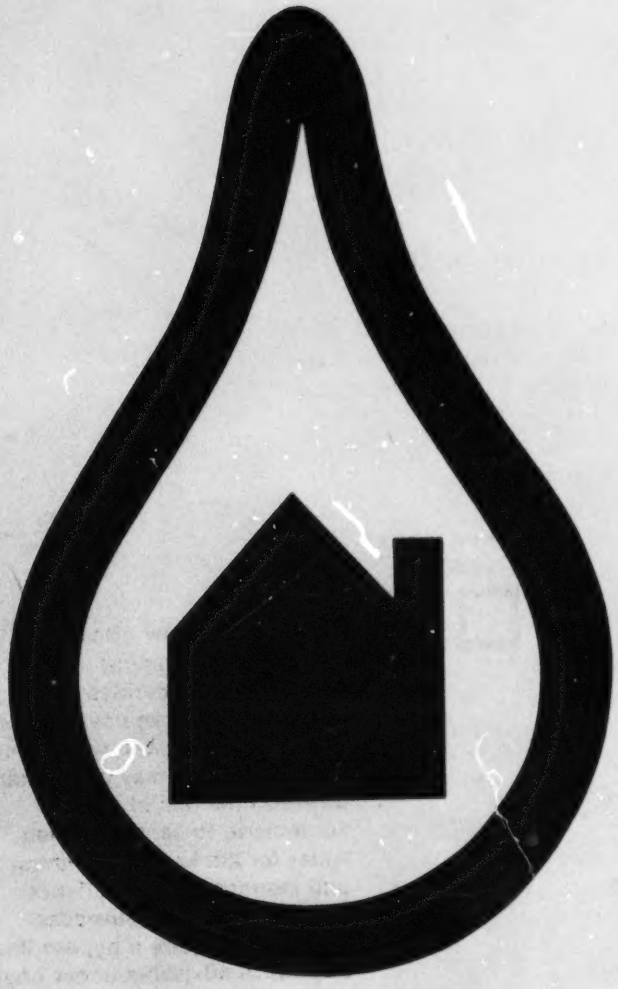

WATER CONSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR THE HOME

save water. . .

save energy. . .

save money

U.S. Department of Agriculture / Extension Service / Program Aid No. 1192

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Water Conservation Checklist for the Home

How much water do you use in a day? A gallon? Ten gallons? Few people know how much they use. The amount is likely to be *60 gallons per person per day.* This figure has tripled since 1900!

Imagine what it would be like to turn on the tap and find nothing there. People in some parts of the country know this can happen. They are learning how to conserve water. They know that water is a limited resource.

Now, water shortages are a local or regional problem. Someday they may be a national problem. It is wise to learn *now* how to conserve nature's precious supply of fresh water.

This checklist is designed to help you see how effectively you are using water, and to alert you to ways to save it.

Test Yourself. . .
Your Water Conservation Checklist

As you read this list, check the steps you have already taken to conserve water. Note what you still need to do to become a better manager of water resources.

Have Done	Will Do	Plumbing
☐	☐	Install flow control devices in showers.
☐	☐	Or, limit the amount of shower water by the way you use hot and cold water faucets.
☐	☐	Cut off all water if you are going to be away from home on a vacation or trip. This keeps children from turning on outside faucets while you are away.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	Check to see how often your home water softening equipment regenerates and backwashes. It can use as much as 100 gallons of water each time it does this. You may want to cut down on the use of such equipment. Reserve softened water for kitchen use, bathing and laundry. Use unsoftened water for all other purposes. (This may require a bypass line but this is advisable under any circumstances.)

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	Insulate hot water pipes to reduce the amount of water which must be run to get hot water to the faucet.
☐	☐	If possible, locate the hot water heater as close as possible to bathroom, kitchen and laundry areas. The closer the heater is to the faucet, the less water has to be run. For this reason, it's sometimes better to have two small water heaters located in strategic places.
☐	☐	Check faucets for drips. Make repairs promptly. These problems get worse—never better.
☐	☐	Teach children to turn water faucets off tightly after use.
☐	☐	See if your toilet is continuing to flow after flushing. Put a small amount of food coloring into the tank. If the color trickles into the bowl, there is a leak and repairs are needed.
☐	☐	Place a quart plastic (not glass) bottle filled with water in your flush tank to save 1 quart of water per flush.
☐	☐	Don't use a brick to fill space in your toilet flush tank. Brick particles could damage valves.
☐	☐	You can adjust the float level of the toilet to reduce the amount of water necessary to flush the toilet. Do this carefully to avoid damaging the system.
☐	☐	In buying a new toilet, look for a "low volume" model. They don't use as much water per flush.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	Put "gray water" (saved from cleaning, bathing, etc.) in the toilet—*not the flush tank*—when it needs flushing. Otherwise, if the system loses pressure, "gray" water in the tank could back-siphon and get into your drinking water system.
☐	☐	Avoid using the toilet as a trash basket for facial tissues, etc. Each flush uses *5 to 7 gallons* of water.

Laundry

☐	☐	Wash only *full* loads of laundry.
☐	☐	Buying a new washing machine? An automatic clothes washer uses *32-45* gallons of water per load. Shop carefully and look for these features:

- Models that use less water.
- Capacity to fill needs. Don't buy a larger machine than you need.
- "Float fill" models that provide a more accurate control of the amount of water used than "time" fill.
- Water level controls so you can adjust the amount of water you use, depending on the load.
- "Suds saver" models that save wash water for later loads.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	Use the "gray" water that siphons from your washing machine into a laundry tub for cleaning, to flush the toilet, or water plants. (See directions for using "gray" water on plants.) Use all "gray" water as soon as possible. Do not store longer than 24 hours.
☐	☐	Save handwashing jobs and do them all together. If possible, use the same suday water for several items. Make one rinse do the job of two.
☐	☐	Check garments to make sure they need washing. Don't wash clothes more often than necessary.
☐	☐	Avoid buying new clothes that require separate washings.

Personal Care

☐	☐	Urge family members to take showers instead of tub baths. Baths take as much as *30-50* gallons of water. Showers use *5-15 gallons* of water per minute.
☐	☐	Cut down on the number of showers taken. Replace some of them with sponge baths using a small amount of water in a basin.
☐	☐	Limit shower time to *2 minutes* or less.
☐	☐	Relax with massage, stretching, or exercises instead of showers to save water.
☐	☐	Turn off shower water while you apply soap to body or lather hair.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	If possible, close bathtub drain during shower so that all the water stays in the tub. Use this to flush the toilet or water *outdoor* plants.
☐	☐	Turn off water while you shave, brush teeth, etc.
☐	☐	Encourage children to change into play clothes after school so that school and play clothes can be worn several times.

Food Preparation

☐	☐	Save water used to wash produce and to do other kitchen chores by placing a bowl or basin under the faucet. Use water saved for cleaning, watering plants, etc.
☐	☐	To get warm water, turn hot water on first; then add cold water as needed. You get warm water quicker this way and save water.
☐	☐	Reduce the use of garbage disposals (which use as much as *2 gallons* of water per minute) by peeling vegetables, eggs and other foods on newspapers. Wrap the food waste and dispose of it with the trash. Or, use food waste in a garden compost pile.
☐	☐	Use only the amount of water necessary to cook foods such as frozen vegetables and stews. You'll preserve nutritional value as well as save water.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	Cook foods over low heat in pans with tightly fitted lids to reduce evaporation of liquid.
☐	☐	Plan more one-dish casserole meals in which vegetables are cooked without adding cooking water.
☐	☐	Use a tea kettle to heat water and avoid loss of water through evaporation.
☐	☐	Time foods that must boil so that too much evaporation *does not* take place.
☐	☐	Select the proper size pans for cooking. Pans that are too large require more cooking water.
☐	☐	Use a pressure cooker to save time and water.
☐	☐	If possible, cover or wrap foods in aluminum foil during baking or roasting to cut down on the evaporation of liquid.
☐	☐	Save leftover vegetable juices for reconstituting soups, cooking raw or frozen vegetables and stews, and making gravy. Use within a day or two.
☐	☐	Use leftover fruit juices for drinking and making gelatin salads.
☐	☐	Store drinking and meal preparation water for a short period of time (24 hours or less) if an emergency water shortage seems likely. Use clean plastic or glass jugs with tight-fitting lids. Keep in the refrigerator.

Have Done	Will Do	
		Meal Service
☐	☐	Chill water in bottles in the refrigerator to avoid running water. Shake bottle before serving to incorporate air in the water so that it doesn't taste flat.
☐	☐	Put drinking water on the table only if people really drink it.
		Dishwashing
☐	☐	Cut down on the number of utensils used in preparing food, and on the plates and glassware used with the meals. This will save on dishwashing.
☐	☐	Wash only full loads of dishes in dishwasher. A dishwasher uses about *16 gallons* of water per load.
☐	☐	Avoid unnecessary rinsing of dishes that go into the dishwasher. Scrape if necessary.
☐	☐	If washing dishes by hand, use one pan of soapy water for washing and a second pan of hot water for rinsing. Wash least dirty dishes first.
		Household Cleaning
☐	☐	Wipe up small spills as they occur to avoid frequent mopping of floors.
☐	☐	Regularly vacuum carpets and rugs so you won't need to shampoo them too often. Take care of spots as they occur.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	"Collect" household cleaning chores. Do them together to save water.

House Plants

☐	☐	Use rinse water saved from bathing or clothes washing to water indoor plants. *Do not* use soapy water on indoor plants. It could damage them.
☐	☐	Water indoor plants only when needed. Too much water can damage plants.

Outside the Home

☐	☐	Car washing can use a lot of water. You may have to lower your standards and wash the car less often.
☐	☐	Drive your car onto your lawn before you wash it. Water the grass as you wash your car.
☐	☐	Use a bucket of sudsy water to remove soil from the car. Hose down only as a final rinse.
☐	☐	Take advantage of a soft summer rain to wash your car. Get out there with soap and a sponge!
☐	☐	If water supply permits use of outdoor pool, cover the pool when it's not being used to prevent evaporation.
☐	☐	Clean the swimming pool filter often. Then you won't have to replace the water as often.

Have Done	Will Do	
☐	☐	Soapy water that comes from soap you can use on your skin is OK for *outdoor* plants. Do not use water with bleach or borax compound in it on plants. It could damage them. Rinse water can be used on *outdoor* or *indoor* plants.
☐	☐	If water is rationed or otherwise restricted, lawns and annuals should receive the lowest priority for outside watering. Trees and shrubs are more expensive to replace and should receive any available water.
☐	☐	"Mulch" to retain moisture in the soil. Spread leaves, lawn clippings, newspapers or plastic around plants. Mulching also controls weeds that compete with garden plants for water.
☐	☐	Try "trickle" or "drip" irrigation systems in outdoor gardens. These methods use 25-50 percent less water than hose or sprinkler methods. A tiny plastic tube runs along the ground near plants. The trickle system provides many tiny holes to water closely placed plants. The drip system tubing contains holes or openings at strategic places for tomatoes and other plants that are more widely spaced.
☐	☐	If you are using a garden hose or sprinkler, water the garden less frequently but water it thoroughly. Don't let water run down driveway or street.
☐	☐	Use a broom, not the hose, to clean the garage, the sidewalks and the driveway.

List 10 Water Conservation Practices You Plan To Use This Year:

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This publication was prepared by the following Extension USDA specialists:

Glenda Pifer, Housing Specialist
Evelyn Spindler, Nutrition Specialist
William Cox, Agricultural Engineer
Robert Wearne, Horticulturalist

For more information on ways to conserve water, contact your local Extension Service, usually listed in your telephone directory under county government offices. Or, write to the State Extension Service at your State land-grant university.

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